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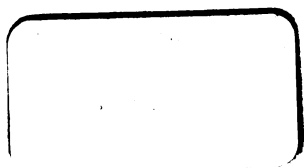
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*Letters of a*  
**PLATTSBURG PATRIOT**

BY  
O. N. E.

[*John Bryson Barnes*]



WASHINGTON  
THE UNITED STATES INFANTRY ASSOCIATION  
1917

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**To the Plattsburg  
Rookie who believes  
in preparedness and  
is willing to prove it.**





**"ANY PREVIOUS MILITARY SERVICE?" SAYS THE CAP**

## Letters of a Plattsburg Patriot

Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York.

June 6, 1916.

DEAR BILL:

I beg to announce to you that valor has put one over on several years of ripe discretion. The preparedness bug has nipped me and, as you lightly read this confession, I am doing my bit to put our puny military establishment on a stable basis.

No further active membership for me in the Old Guard of Club Warriors whose total labors for national defense have consisted of free advice and liberal contributions to the internal revenue on booze. I solicit no further correspondence on the subject, and will ask you to excuse, please, the bluntness of an old soldier.

Well, I arrived at 6 A.M. yesterday and am still going strong. I remember seeing, when a boy, a picture of a military camp. There were our brave boys in blue making chests at the sympathetic lady visitors; prancing horses waiting for the parade; gallant officers all in gold braid flitting about where they could do the most good; Old Glory waving defiantly from the top of the pole, while the band played and the green grass grew all around. This camp reminds me of that stirring scene—it's so different. I have a feeling that there is no such animal outside of story books.

There was no glad hand or Welcome-to Our-City committee to meet me at the train, so I trailed along to Headquarters with a lot of other saviors of the country, paid my thirty dollars, and was herded over to my Company.

"Any previous military service?" says the Captain.

"No, not exactly—but I was a member of the Possum Scuffle Boys' Brigade in 18—."

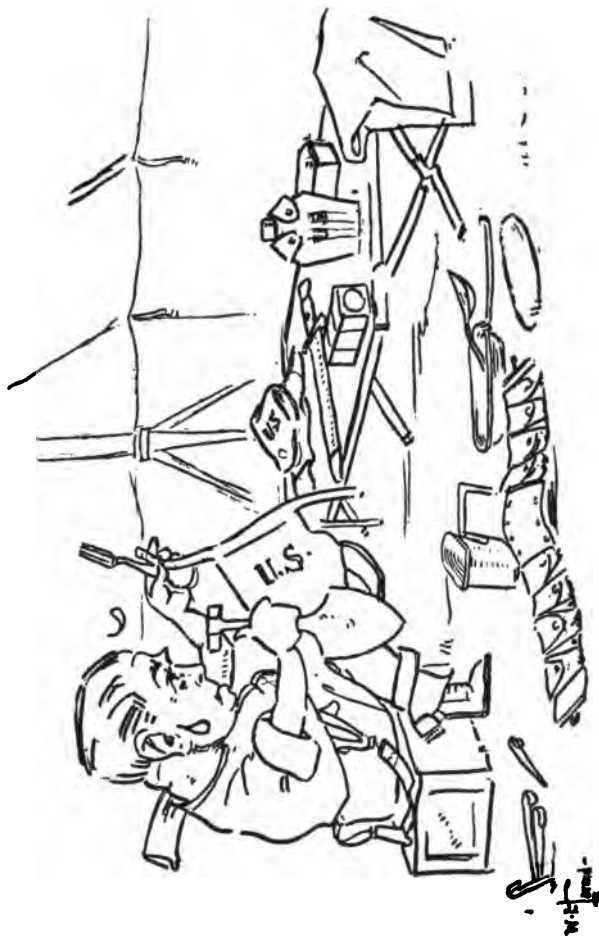
"The sergeant will issue your equipment. Go in the fourth tent. Next!"

Didn't even ask my previous condition of servitude—and me a real Who's Who back home. I backed up feeling as though the umpire had called me out without seeing the play.

The Sergeant gave me a stony once-over, and a bundle and bag said to contain all the makings of a fierce campaign. Eight cots in the tent, a lantern, bucket and wash basin—no further signs of habitation except seven other lost, strayed or stolen-looking patriots doing upper berth stunts as they changed civilian dress for the gay and festive raiment of a rookie.

I felt lonely, but not alone.

A careful inventory of the bag of implements showed thirty-one different kinds, with not even a family resemblance to each other. I soon found that they were not a new kind of picture puzzle as nothing seemed to fit. I decided to treat them with dignified indifference until someone should give me the combination.



NOTHING SEEMED TO FIT!

My meditations were somewhat disturbed when a pompous chap, who seemed to be a sort of local foreman, handed me a pick. It developed later that this was not on account of outward evidences of my Mick ancestry, as I at first suspected, since the others drew shovels and spades. We were then shown where to make nice little ditches around the tents and criss-cross about the company streets. I wound up with a blister on my lily white thumb, but with the happy discovery that I had retained some of the skill acquired in digging angle worms in Aunt Susan's back yard, twenty years ago. It made me feel more kittenish than half a dozen highballs.

I soon had reason to hail with deep admiration the correct forecast of the pompous chap—for then it rained. It continues the motion as we go to press.

From my perch on my cot I wondered if they had enough umbrellas to go 'round; what military precautions were exercised to prevent our getting wet feet; and if it really paid to save the country for a whole month. Did you ever have an unobstructed view, from a tent door, of a busy June rain mixing mud in a company street? Who was the individual who complained because the day was dark and dreary? Cheap stuff! I didn't see his day, but I would rather have had it.

Then, "Outside!" The umbrellas evidently forgotten!

"Fall in!" In what? I already had a start of three inches, if they meant the mud.

"Forward, march!" Going to dine and the going was heavy. As I slopped along through the sea of mud, I began to suspect that I might find the life of a Patriot on the active list dull and unattractive. The dining room was not a thing of architectural beauty, nor were the fixtures just what one would call fancy, but I found a vacant place on a pine bench and entered, with considerable success, on a month's career of stowing away large quantities of what is known, in the vernacular of the hoi-polloi, as plain food.

Others, too, seemed to have made very satisfactory working arrangements with their appetites, as I noticed no extensive use of the back pedal during the formation.

Back to the cot! Home, Sweet Home! But, no. More "falling in" stuff; much ambling about; rapid development of native talent in the gentle art of making up bunks and getting things tucked away; every man his own housekeeper—not a valet in the place.

One hundred and fifteen preparedness bugs showed up in this company at the final round-up. Fat, lean, tall, short—representing every phase of human and in-human endeavor back home, but only fellow rookies here.

The end of a Perfect Day—picture postcard to the folks by a "lantern dimly burning." When is a light not a light?

Time to pipe down. Horrible discovery! Wet feet! No sheets! No clothes hangers! Ain't war Hell, though?



THE LIFE OF A PATRIOT ON THE ACTIVE LIST

More rain. How cute its patter sounds on the tent! And now—it is the rattle of machine guns, while I—powder stained and with sweat streaming from my bronzed brow—wave my trusty sword and roar hoarse commands to my brave—BIFF! “Get up!” First call for Reveille. Nine o’clock to five-thirty without a quiver. All previous records smashed.

Today, we start through the mill. Lead, kindly light, is the prayer of

Yours,

Jo.

P. S.—It wasn’t sweat after all. The tent leaked.



Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York,  
June 11, 1916.

DEAR BILL:

Sunday. That ancient and honorable rule about resting on the Seventh Day may not have been a frame-up by the I. W. W. members of the Board, nor intended with any direct application to this camp, but, Bill, I couldn't have worked out a better schedule for the day myself.

Reveille half an hour later. The sun which had apparently taken the veil for the week is showing its smiling face in the most public and brazen manner; most of the Patriots look kind and nearly human at the prospect of getting dried out and a chance to do the family washing; no further responsibilities today, other than to stick around the camp and bitterly think of the fierce joys of the morrow.

These last few days of equal responsibilities, sore muscles and wet feet have made all the pilgrims feel like they belong to the same lodge, and the pampered son of a wealthy papa has a growing suspicion that there may be regular human beings in the world who do not figure extensively in the Income Tax Reports. A few nights in a squad tent with seven other fellows and days full of common martial trials, individual and collective, are recommended by yours truly to remove the form from formality and to put a crimp in any holier-than-thou notions.

You can't really begin to know a bunch of misfits until you try to keep step with the Warrior in front, in line with the ones on your right and left, carry your gun like the Patriot in rear, while you all get bawled-out indiscriminately for looking or slanting or moving in the wrong direction.

But, after all, the most alarming progress is made at night. Then, with a total population of eight in a fourteen by fourteen tent, "Run slow, thank you" signs are recklessly disregarded. When the individual you rate as the silk pajama kid peels down to his underclothes and resigns his battered form to the sacred hospitality of a two and a half by seven canvas cot, alongside of the village plumber, who takes the dip with his socks on, social barriers begin to bog down. And, when the last man in puts out the lantern—but not its subtle aroma, which lingers for an hour or so, and the flag goes up for the nocturnal free for all chorus, a fellow may thoroughly appreciate his unusual facilities for meditation at close range on the awful sameness of human nature. It's sure no place for a gent with a tendency to exclusiveness. The chorus from your own tent is echoed and re-echoed along the line, varying in tones and magnitude from the soothing burr of a buzz-saw to the plaintive wail of a steam calliope in distress. Also, there's the restless guy with the touch of insomnia who runs amuck at all hours in hot pursuit of a match or drink of water.

The only reasonable plan of defense seems

to be to beat the bunch to the feathers and start your own entertainment before the curtain goes up for the big show.

As for work during the week, I must admit we did have to give up some of our spare time. The game is called promptly at 5.30 (not P.M.) regardless of wet grounds, and all one has to do for the next fifteen minutes is to dress, wash or take a shower, and get in line for the morning round-up. Believe me, William, getting into uniform with all the buttons, hooks and straps in places according to the latest fashion requires patience, observation and dexterity—and is usually accompanied by a monologue of appropriate remarks.

Breeches, the warrior's substitute for trousers, violate all rules of substantial architecture by being constructed little-end down, and by being laced up corset-wise along the shin bone. Above the knees the designer has been more liberal, as the second story would accommodate two occupants without violating tenement regulations. The leggings, on first acquaintance, impressed me as a bewildering group of eyelets and hooks and strings, all of which were found to fit in some place when one worked out the proper sequence. The shirt and sweater are approached and entered from one end only, and my first military maneuver was to get a perfect forty-two into a thirty-four sweater. I have never before so appreciated the cramped expression of a sausage. The soldier's substitute for an umbrella is the

poncho. It is an imperfect cross between a raincoat and a wind shield with all the bad habits and few virtues of either. It is worn suspended from the shoulders in such manner that any water that doesn't go down one's neck, escapes from the flapping tails at exactly the right angles to go into his shoes. It is an article of equipment that a



A PERFECT FORTY-TWO INTO A THIRTY-FOUR SWEATER

rookie soon learns to class as a spare-part and accessory only to his discomfort.

I have to hand it to the genius who devised this system of raiment which annoys, baffles, crowds, sticks, pinches, bulges and binds in so many different places at the same time.

Thus daily the conflict rages until 8 P.M.

After that seemly hour one has no duties until ten, when one of the company N. C. O's. checks up to see that you are observing the curfew instead of playing hookey off limits.

During the day-time—if 5.30 A.M. is really the beginning of day-time—there are short truces between rounds for eating, resting and keeping one's traps in order. As my busy little brain has not been quite equal to grasping the details of military time, these periods for relaxation are the really anxious moments of my haunted military career—being but a succession of apprehensions and alarms.

Although the bulletin board, the official dope sheet for the Company, has a list of "Calls for the Day," it means nothing to me but furtively waiting for something to turn up. I have tried to work it out by everything from calculus to plain arithmetic, but every time I decide that I have a few minutes out of the trenches, my tranquility is suddenly disturbed by "Outside!" or "Fall in!"—just as I am at a critical stage of shaving, or dressing, or trying to get on friendly relations with some strange and haughty article of equipment. The bugle and whistle signals seem to sound at the most unexpected and arbitrary times, and I must dash madly out and charge through a milling mass of bewildered Patriots to get my place in line before time is called by the Top Sergeant. I have now found a practicable, if not happy solution, by lathering only one side of my face at a time and dressing in



—AT A CRITICAL STAGE OF SHAVING

the door of the tent, so that I can usually beat the gong by a second or two.

When I had begun to feel that I was getting onto the kinks of company fatigue—(which consists of a continual round of spring house cleaning about the tent, the manly art of digging a ditch here and filling up one there, combing the company street with a rake and other little attentions calculated to keep things tidy,—“policed” is the proper military lingo), they started to hand out the real dope—drilling, you know, and all that sort of thing.

The first turn in the morning is calisthenics. Thirty minutes of up, down, turn, raise, out, in, swing, strike, s-t-r-e-t-c-h, then back up and do it some other way. There must be three hundred muscles hidden about my manly form that have been doing nothing but taking up room for the past ten years. If my agility continues to increase at the present rate I figure on challenging Pavlowa for the plain and fancy dido championship. Some of the fat boys are getting the first peek at their toes in fifteen years.

Then came “Foot movements.” Honestly, I didn’t know for three days whether I was coming or going, or why, or how, or from what direction. In fact, I usually met myself en route. Right was left, and left was right, and never the twain in tune. I juggled my arms and legs in a most entangling and helpless manner and taxed my mind to the limit of safety in trying to come across at “hun!” “hoo!” “hree!” “hore!”

but I was always a lap behind or a neck ahead of the procession.

Determination and cunning anticipation availed me nothing.

I seemed to have a fatal ability to get the signals mixed and pull a bone-head play, and from the way I mussed things up on the squad, I feel reasonably sure that I have no chance for the All-American team this year.

However, after being promoted to the rear rank by the corporal of our squad, who is a high-school cadet (but my guide, philosopher and friend) the main ideas commenced to percolate in a modest and timid way and I began to understand what some of it was about. Now, after six days of up the hill and down again, my waltz-canter has eased off into the regulation thirty-inch step and, with a moderate amount of advice and suggestion, I can find my place in ranks and keep along with the gang without knocking down the whole row.

The military piece—to call it a gun is exceedingly bad form—is surely one nifty little weapon. We received it the second day—all covered with triggers and bolts and sights, and cosmoline which one wipes off with a piece of burlap if it has not already responded to the gentle caresses of his clothing while negotiating its hazardous transportation to his tent. You know, Bill, I am gun shy, and in this game where everything starts and stops with a jerk, my safety-first impulse had plain sailing until I found out the durned thing would not start shoot-



ing unless provoked. It was some grand strategy the way I coaxed and jollied that fire-arm along while I explored certain chambers and springs with my cleaning rag. Some of the more brazen and reckless spirits ventured to peek into and swab out the innermost oily of oilies, but I appreciate, from the last few days, the indelicacy of being private in name only and, so far, I have confined my intrusions to the barrel and other appurtenances unquestionably intended for public inspection.

We use the piece to do the Manual of Arms with, and as something to carry when we drill. One has to juggle it on the shoulder, right, left, and down again, up again, hold it at all sorts of tiresome positions and angles and, in practice firing, work all the funny little side shifts, yank the bolt, squint one eye, elbow the height of the shoulder, hold the breath (without biting the tongue) and at the same time look as nearly intelligent as one's natural limitations will permit.

Well, that fire-arm and I had some tussle for the first couple of days. It seemed to object to proper regulation and control and as a consequence our official relations were somewhat strained. In my frantic efforts to keep it right side up and front side before, I used the grizzly bear, jiu jitsu, half Nelson, and all the other plain and fancy holds not forbidden by this year's rules. The popular verdict would have been about a draw except in one round when it got beyond control and assaulted a brave in the



ASSAULTED A BRAVE IN THE REAR RANK

rear rank. I refrain from repeating his coarse but pertinent comments. Then, in my haste to assert my authority, it caught me on the head just abeam the port ear—the gun's round by a wide margin.

It also had a coquettish little trick of landing on my toes when coming to the "Order," and of spurring me at indiscriminate times and places with the front sight. I have finally trained it to stand meekly by my right toe, not to fall in the dirt when making the stack, and other properties considered correct form in good little rifles.

Monday, the Camp Surgeon took us in hand, looking, no doubt, for ivory heads—statistics not yet published. As no witnesses were called, I may have been given the benefit of the doubt.

Good little soldiers go to bed soon, and to sleep when they can, but they must be up and scent the morning dew by 5.30. That's what makes them so fierce.

Good night,

Jo.

P. S.—I am returning your golf sticks, I will not need them this month.

Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York,  
June 18, 1916.

DEAR BILL:

Sunday No. 2. Our Puritan fathers may have been sticklers about some of the trifles, and generally harsh on the local cut-ups, but they made one record for liberal ideas when they didn't do anything but gillotine an enthusiastic Brother for working on Sunday. They might have sentenced the lucky cuss to Miles Standish's Army. I forecast with considerable assurance, that during the present campaign no one of this bunch of Patriots will subject himself to criticism by wantonly breaking the Fourth Commandment.

All is quiet on the northern front today.

It has been another large week and gives me an idea of what a neat little stunt it is to get wise on this soldiering business. After these two weeks of back breaking, muscle stretching, blister-raising vicissitudes, I am thoroughly convinced that I am not in the midst of a childish escapade. I also have suspicions that our millions of rally-round-the-flag sons of the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave—always on tap to spring to arms over night—would not be able to put over much eat-'em-alive stuff against trained men with steel helmets and 42 centimeter guns.

And, to ruminate a bit on our glorious past: Is there any record of our having to

hire extra help to enroll the eager warriors, either during the hectic times of '76, the stirring days of '63 or our late unpleasantness with Spain?

But suppose the bunch did turn out as advertised by the Keepers of the Dove of Peace. The first casualty list would result from trying to avoid the crowd and keep out of each others way. It would read like the census report. However, the survivors of the *mêlée* would be surprised, shocked, mortified and grieved to find that their further activities were not limited to having their pictures taken for the home papers, and reading accounts of our hand-picked military prowess.

No, William, there would be other labors for their willing hands,—little tasks that would in time lead to a distant vision of a rugged trail, that they might be able to negotiate in six months or so, if they kept on the job and a safe distance in advance of the enemy. Then they would have reached the bottom of the bean-stalk—not real Patriots any more, but high privates sufficiently trained to be herded into a scrap, provided our great floating population of natural born herders hadn't decided to let George complete the great work while they attended to unfinished business back home.

Take it from me, this soldier game is no idle pastime. I arrived with a fixed and definite purpose of emerging from the four weeks' fray the greatest little military marvel south of Harlem. I honestly thought my

superior American nerve (which by another name sounds more sweet) would make me a close second to Stonewall J., himself, but Old General Misinformation whom we free American Citizens have worshipped since we "licked England" has the dope all wrong. A few weeks in camp doesn't make a hell-roarin' fightin' man, but a willing worker, if he's not a bonehead, may grasp some of the rudiments in that time. One of the first of said rudiments is that he hears the cruel facts instead of the kind of fairy tales handed out by tail-gate spellbinders and school histories since the days of our youth. He soon ceases to be one of the many who would raise and equip armies while dummy and, after the next rubber, leads our mighty hosts against any brazen foe that has dared pollute our sacred soil and by appropriate banners and convincing arguments prove to him that his rude intrusion cannot prevail over righteousness as we have never been licked and it can't be did.

Would we raise——? We would . . . and then prop it up with some of our lame ducks, trusting that it would stay put long enough for us to make a quick get away.

Time: 13 minutes later.

Our great body of heavy talkers who mean well, and the after-you-Alfonso defenders, viewing the enemy's discomfort from the high places, have been rudely jarred to find that they have no more prospects against real soldiers than a one-legged man in a marathon. Then red lights and, to the

jolly refrain of "Der Wacht am Rhine," we would get back home (if we still had homes) collect the family trinkets, pay the rude intruder for his time, including authorized expenses of the trip over, and tip him liberally for his slight inconvenience. We might be permitted to keep anything he couldn't use or destroy. Heaven help the rich; the poor know how to beg!

As for this Boy Soldier's contribution towards preparedness this week, when I could keep up, I have been right in on the real rough stuff—learning how to spread out in long lines and advance on the enemy by fits and starts. They tell us that styles have changed since the battle of Bladensburg. when our 7,000 avenging patriots (Congressmen on the bleachers not included) escaped from 4,000 British Regulars with a total loss of only fifteen, mostly caused by heat exhaustion and fatigue from prolonged sprinting.

Now, a fellow is told to run alright, but to do it towards the enemy. We start way back in the thick brush and gumshoe along until it is theoretically time to shoot him up. Then we intimidate him with blank ammunition while other of our brave comrades in khaki rush forward, hit the ground when the sergeant says "Down," and slide along on the points of greatest eminence until an irresistible force comes in contact with an immovable object. We repeat this process until, between sliding and running, crawling and wriggling, we arrive within two hundred



HIT THE GROUND WHEN THE SERGEANT SAYS "DOWN!"



yards of his den. If we would now turn back we would get shot in a locality that might arouse the curiosity of the Pension Board; if we stay put, so does the enemy man and it's a draw, so we must up and at him again. Give us your attention, please, as we are now about to pull the real thriller of the day!

"Fix bayonets!" (All of us who can, without cutting ourselves, do so.) "Charge!" First down, two hundred yards to gain! We are off in a bunch!

Of course, William, if we should practice these stunts for a year we might be able to intrude ourselves on the privacy of the other fellow's trenches, but with a band of such Innocents Abroad as we are, he would not have anything harder to do than await the come-ons and, with his bayonet, stick amidships, fore or aft, as his fancy pleased, the few of us who were able to make the trip. Military etiquette does not prescribe the further details of his conduct, but it would, no doubt, be rude and unsympathetic. Nothing further for him that day than to finish his game of pinochle and figure up his batting average, pending the arrival of the next bunch of brush leaguers.

The soldier man's equipment seems discouraging as an exhibit only, but when a rookie fresh from a swivel chair begins toting it on his back as a steady form of physical diet, the intensity of his ambition to save the country is considerably modified by an inclination to take the 10.40 home—for urgent business reasons. He carries,

besides real fighting irons, his blankets, tent, clothing, toilet and mess outfit and, in campaign, two days' rations, if he has an ambition to do any regular eating. He also has a cute little pick or shovel with which to dig himself a hole—the common or garden variety of holes being very fashionable this season. Any additional necessities he may start with, such as cameras or guava jelly, he surreptitiously abandons at the first halt.

All of this plunder is carried in a mummy shaped pack, said pack being a roll that extends in a most scientific manner along the lines of least resistance from the back of the neck to a point just abaft the Boston hose supporters, depending, more or less, upon a score of varying conditions.

I regret to say that I have not been able to reach a satisfactory working agreement with the pack. Since I first got it properly rolled and geared up I have not had sufficient confidence in my reconstructive ability to unroll it again, though the other blanket which it contains would no doubt considerably temper my nightly dreams about Peary and the Pole. Its adjustment is truly baffling. When low it pulls back like a mule; when high it has a roguish little trick of butting me on the back of the head when I flop down to fire. It is said to weigh thirty-nine pounds, but after the first hour, a straw vote of the company put the average at a ton—no rebate for the crating. After the war is over, I am going to get a



AN INCLINATION TO TAKE THE 10.40 HOME

job helping the Belgians carry their things back. I ought to do well at that now.

All of my experience has served to give me the impression that a soldier with a low brow may get by, but he must have good feet, a strong back, and something under his belt besides adipose tissue.

Next week we have target practice. It is rumored that the gun kicks. It would not surprise me if it also bites and scratches. I am ready for the third degree. Bring on the goat.

Yours,

Jo.

P. S.—About that Bladensburg affair—the British never did catch the rest of those Patriots.



THE BRITISH NEVER DID CATCH THE REST OF THOSE PATRIOTS

Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York,  
June 28, 1916.

DEAR BILL:

The last week of the Big Push. In a few more days the surviving members will have taken out their papers for the Society of the Once-Overs. All freely admit that they have had a perfectly ripping, sliding, blistering time—sorry they can't "stay to finish the job but ———." I have a presentiment that on July 2nd, some fourteen hundred get-rich-quick defenders will start a homeward-bound stampede that will make the "Rookie Special" look like an up-town express at quitting time.

As for me, my united and combined efforts during the month, have been directed towards getting a decision over some of the simpler hand and foot duties of a rear-rank private, but I seem to get more rear-ranker every day. As soon as I get onto the combination of one set of movements they change the programme and I must start on low again. Except for the fact that the whole formation is run on a sliding and benevolent scale where a fellow gets credit for doing his durndest, I would be a leading candidate for rear-rank honors during the remainder of the open season.

When your undersigned deponent returns, dear William, he will not write books on

short cuts for citizen soldiers, but he can suggest to the bountiful crop of Minute Men (or whatever the up-to-date martial term is for that lot of dare-devils who are only waiting to put out the kitchen fire, lock up the dog and stand by to repel invaders), that they might have beaten the bunch back from Bull Run by starting early, but that they are not the kind of trained men that went with Sherman to the Sea.

Further, I beg to announce, that if our untrained legions march to the sound of the cannon, there will be one talented soldier missing—and if you search the tall grass you will there find your Friend Jo improving the shining hours learning to march and shoot and dig. No foreign devil is going to get within the danger limit of my scantily clad scalp until I can give him a run for his money.

I've taken the cure. I submit application with recommendations from my last place, for membership in the Stay-at-Home Club unless I can go to the party with fellows who know enough about the game to last them over Sunday; and, I might add, under an officer whose military knowledge did not thrust itself on him from natural causes—like politics or baldness.

Last week we had target practice—shooting the rifles you know. I had thought we only carried them to make it hard. We shoot at targets that work up and down like dumb waiters. If you hit one, that counts something; but if you shoot over the hill

and kill a cow the markers wave a red flag. I doubtless would have curtailed the innocuous pursuit of happiness of some gentle cow but for the fact that she had been removed to the next county. Due to this precaution, my indiscriminate bombardment of the scenery had no very definite results.

You remember the old Andy Jackson, shoulder-to-shoulder, white-of-the-eye way. Different system now. You hide behind a weed, or your imagination, and shoot as far as you can see 'em. I might have increased my percentage if I had been allowed to follow the Andy method, but the books say it is not good tactics to shoot at the hostiles nearer than two hundred yards. Within that distance you are expected to fix bayonets, advance boldly and stick him in the gizzard or chew his mane—in fact any little courtesy within reason is considered good form.

I was not misinformed about the gun's kick. It does. It did. It also rears badly. I had begun to consider it's behavior a model of dignified resignation and forbearance, so that when it assaulted me on the collar bone, the lip and nose all at the same time, I felt that my faith had been rudely betrayed. However, the Captain had less difficulty in correcting my position the next time. While it never entirely regained my confidence, I could usually make it shoot at the right target and once at 500 yards they actually marked up a bull's-eye. My heart throbbed with excitement as I realized





I WAS NOT MISINFORMED ABOUT THE GUN'S KICK

that had it been some enemy fellow I would have beaned him.

This week we are on the hike, which is sort of an endurance test they put on as a grand finale. It is eight days of over the hills and far away, with the cozy little pack as a constant companion. Who says this year's style has the running boards free?

During the hike we have maneuvers, which consist of a succession of intricate military situations, with a determined enemy hiding some place, or trying to reach Brooklyn in time for the World's Series. We are several miles away, laying in wait or sneaking up on with blank ammunition, sore feet and a growing ambition to get to camp before the potato chowder gives out. Well, after we search out the most likely places, buck barb wire fences, hurdle ditches, wade swamps and flirt with wet grass and poison ivy for ten miles or so, we suddenly locate the crafty invader on the other side of the creek. Our scouts and patrols play peek-a-boo with him awhile, and then up boys and at them! or words to that effect—real military term forgotten for the moment—anyway we all dash forward and the horrible carnage is on.

May I pause to enquire if you ever got shot on the reverse side of the mainsail with a blank cartridge? If so, and thereafter, you don't try to set the pace, but stay back with the rest as the officers tell you to do—Teamwork, my boy. One also learns that while first-over-the-trenches distinction, so

modestly admitted by our reunion heroes, may get you votes thirty years after taking, but you will probably be the last one home. When I go over I want a few huskies to share the honors with me. No fireworks these days. It takes the whole bunch, heaving together, to win a fight.

After an hour or two of negotiating untold distances serpentwise, or flitting from cover to cover, and just as you are so all-in that you have decided to abruptly terminate an inglorious military career by spraining something or playing dead—recall goes. The umpires then decide who won (but generally who didn't) and it is something less than a hundred miles to camp, though opinions will not be unanimous on this point.

When camp is reached, the real heavy-weight maneuvering of the day starts. With much backing and filling and "give way to the right," "give way to the left," "keep off the line," etc., all the pup-tents finally stand in a row if—the wind doesn't blow and the pins hold. Next comes a period of "rest" during which you may remove the stains of war, including the burned powder from your rifle, make repairs and alterations to damaged feet and indulge in the exciting field sport of messing.

I have never been quite able to qualify in the approved tactics of messing. You should know that a soldier never eats—that would be a most unmilitary proceeding. He messes—his meals being just one mess after another. There seems to be sufficient reason for his



THE HEAVYWEIGHT MANEUVERING OF THE DAY STARTS

doing so because his meals, whatever the hour, are as much alike as Abe Lincoln's two peas.

The mess implements are more substantial than fancy, and rather more limited in number than the purposes for which they serve. For instance, the same spoon must do for oatmeal, coffee, sugar, rice pudding and stew, and the same fork is used according to the traditions of our best families and also in the manner of a harpoon to spear the meat or potatoes as they rush hurriedly from one end of the table to the other. One finally learns that unwritten etiquette presumes a certain swift activity on the part of the lips before the article is used on a new job, and that the approved sequence is to work out the problem on the less stickier substances first.

Messing on the hike requires a dexterity in juggling and an ability for quick decisions that no beginner can hope to acquire in a single campaign. As you approach the serving place you hold out the top and bottom of your mess kit, tin cup, knife, fork and spoon, and receive potatoes, meat, gravy, prunes, beans, bread, etc., in a slapdash manner that speaks volumes for military precision and the reckless mixing of units. Aside from the danger of a catastrophe resulting from rocking the boat, one must be an expert in the childhood game of Pigs-in-the-Clover in order to avoid winding up with a mixture that has the appearance of chopsuey or Hungarian goulash,

but tastes like neither. To flinch, means instant baptism and the loss of your place in line. To make your get-a-way to a place of repose not already commandeered by one of the thousand other hungry defenders, requires a proficiency in line bucking and a knowledge of traffic regulations only acquired through sincere and heroic experiences.

In the meantime you have discovered that your aluminum handles are excellent transmitters of heat. The general results are violation of speed regulations, congested traffic, pertinent exclamations and frequent collisions in which hot coffee, gravy and stewed fruit figure extensively. However, such little incidents are not without educational value and doubtless are specially arranged to bring tribute to the talented expert who selected the color for the uniform, as olive drab provides low visibility for all foreign substances. Absolutely nothing shows whither spilled or smeared on it.

With practice and determination a fellow may acquire doodle-bug expertness in backing in and out of a pup-tent and, if he has not a serious regard for comfort, he can arrange two blankets over a cluster of stones or a bower of dewberry briars so that reveille will not only be welcomed but actually anticipated by an hour or two. If it doesn't rain and the weather is nice and warm—which it is not—one has nothing to do after the hot-air conference at night until 5.15 A.M. except to repose in martial slumber.



—AND FREQUENT COLLISIONS

This may include some regular sleep if your pup-tent partner doesn't kick or snore. It certainly is real country life, old man, but it is said to make a fellow feel good when it quits hurting.

I wonder if the mileage is guaranteed, because I begin to show signs of wear and shrinkage. It is already seven inches less all the way round from front to rear, but I can sprint a hundred yards without wheezing. I can also get outside of the regular allowance of Irish stew at breakfast.



SEVEN INCHES LESS ALL THE WAY 'ROUND

One other point in the argument, Bill: I have ceased figuring with such fervid interest on the length, breadth and thickness of that sacred institution—the Family



Tree. This little jaunt has convinced me that there are some real people who will not be able to trace their ancestry to the Mayflower for a couple of generations yet. This bunkee of mine probably thinks Plymouth Rock is something you get out of cold storage, but despite this great disadvantage he is a regular he-man and a good soldier. While it is true his folks came over several boats after the arrival of my poor but honest ancestors, no doubt they all came for the same reasons. The going on "this side" has been good for both, whether they gathered in the sheaves by selling phony clothes on Third Avenue or by trading English rum to the Indians for real estate.

I'm glad I came to this camp. It has had distinct educational features.

Jo.

P. S.—About that bull's-eye—some friend fired on my target.

Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York,  
July 7, 1916.

DEAR BILL:

Preambles, whereases, and other forms of acute explanations, not being in the drill book, have no regular place in these short and simple annals of a rookie. Therefore, I hand out the big news without a quiver or flivver—I'm a hangover for the next camp.

Whether you regard friend Jo as a subject for suspicion or sympathy, an expression of your opinion is not requested. He seeks only to obtain from you by wire (pre-paid) thirty dollars, and a complete and perfect silence.

I had become graciously resigned to the prospect of soon leaving this get-ready programme to struggle along the best it could without me. In fact, I had planned a campaign, the essential feature of which was, as soon as the gate was opened, to ease off to within comfortable taxi distance of my own fireside and thereafter to assist by advice from the side lines.

I have seen by the papers, William, that the Mexicans have started something of a soiree down at Corizal. Papa Carranza has put over considerable rough stuff and gotten away with it while we have been patiently submitting our recommendations from Patagonia, or Labrador, as proof that our inten-

tions were honorable—and remote—but when he undertakes to shoot up our soldiers, we debar his further contributions from our joke book. His other playful little pranks we may have regarded as trifles between friends, but no bewhiskered gentlemen can depopulate our sparsely settled army without attracting our serious attention. That's us!

The President leads our high card right off the reel by calling out the Militia. Carranz plays second hand low and crafty by



**EACH THOUSAND OF US WILL HAVE ONE CITIZEN SOLDIER  
AS A PERSONAL BODY-GUARD**

telling us to either put up or shut up. That is when I had a hunch which told me to linger.

Take Preparedness Nuts! There's a Reason!

The Milish responds—more or less. Trained to a minute—some longer—and at present writing all who are physically able to make the trip are being herded towards the border. The Militia, be it known, is the nation's military bulwark—one hundred thousand strong. In case of any real trouble our protection is thus splendidly provided for, as each of us might have one citizen soldier as a personal body guard. Militiamen are also our best examples of national philanthropists as they have been soldiering for practice and charity. This donation party is an honored institution and apparently a necessary one, because, after the pensions have been paid, our extensive system of creeks macadamized, or otherwise made navigable, and government buildings erected at all the wide places in the roads, there is only about \$4.38 left in the annual kitty. By making this go as far as it will the Militia prepare themselves for the First Line Troops, so we are told, and now are marching to the sound of the roaring Rio Grande.

The Milish will do its durndest, Bill, but we can't spend that in Mexico.

However, we know from past experiences that training is but a fad of the overcautious, that equipment is expensive, and its only use is to give the boys a chance to answer

questions and pose for the girls. The burden of the prevailing opinion on the general subject is to the effect that we are a lot of roarin', tearin', darein' patriots, and that against our great national assets of shirt bosoms full of chests and money in the bank no enemy can prevail.

My Country 'Tis of Thee—and thou. If it calls, I go, but Alice in Wonderland has too much on me at the present state of my military efficiency to make the going seem reasonably good. My valor of discretion tells me to stick around here until the further edge of my patriotism gets nicked, or I can qualify to swap pills on a fifty-fifty basis with any one of them turbulent Mexican outcasts. At the present stage of the game I choose to duck all calls to follow on with some militia fellow with good intentions and a night-and-a-day's intensive training setting the pace. He might be a willing sport with sound ideas about rounding up the long green, or other civilian pastimes, but my personal indulgence in his untutored methods of corralling a bunch of "Greasers" would not, I fear, operate to postpone my interest in Kingdom Come.

If I should get horned by a bunch of cactus and some chili-con-carne son-of-a-gun with a machete, amputated my legs just under the chin, I would then, of course, have no further interest in who was No. 1 man, but I'm sure some querulous about it now. When I go if I can't keep, I'll insist on being kept.



IF I SHOULD GET HORNED BY A BUNCH OF CACTUS

Well, one more hitch for me, and pending that event, I am free to roam about over the scenes of my late activities until the Tired Business Men arrive on the 12th. I know just tired they are, and, believe me, they are rested now, completely, in comparison to their state of relaxation at the end of the camp.

This week is the beginning of the Junior Camp—bringing up the college chaps like father. They at first milled around a bit and appeared somewhat downcast, at having to can the colored hat bands and lavender socks, no doubt, but now after three days they are getting bedded down to a state of either resignation or repentance. Snappy little kids, too! Get 'em while they're young is the correct sequence; then, when they reach the Landsturm, like your Uncle Jo, and the preparedness hornet again runs amuck in the Land, the sweet seclusion of a pup tent will not seem so strangely unattractive and they can get the infantry pack to camp without putting it on a truck.

These youngsters will not be able to pull much of the rah! rah! dear, old campus horse-play for the next five weeks, and their nearest approach to a "Lark" will be beating that king of early risers to daily toil.

Yours,

Jo.

P. S.—Here's hoping that after the thrills of June, July will pass like a parade.

Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York,  
July 16, 1917.

DEAR BILL:

Time was called and the second round started on the 12th as advertised. It got under way with a full cargo of apprehensive and expectant inmates, as in the June session, but being a hang-over the stirring adventures of the first days out had no terrors and few mysteries for me.

All repeaters here wear a stripe on their sleeve to distinguish them from the common herd who are up for their first offense, and as evidence to those uninitiated ones that we have survived a campaign and are now regular devils at this soldiering business. I haven't felt so noticed since I recited "Curfew" on the last day of school. I make frequent and heroic efforts to get my chest out further, but there is still so much of it below the belt that I fear my military appearance is permanently retarded.

Do you happen to know of anything real good for falling of the chest?

After a warrior bold has been once over the jumps, they let him select the particular brand of training he wants to frivol with in the next session. If straight infantry seems to lack sufficient action to meet a cultivated taste for pep, he can try his luck with the cavalry, artillery or engineers.

Infantry is said to be the backbone of the



Army and I am led to believe that the statement has elements of truth. Personally, I feel, after a month of it, that I am not more than the lower rounds of that useful accessory. I might get out of the cellar if I continued the rôle for another period, but it seems the big part of the doughboy's mission on earth is to walk—and fondly tote a pack. I found so little genuine humor or amusement in either procedure that I decided to guide my blistered footsteps toward other fields.

After a careful inventory of my undeveloped accomplishments, I decided to try my hand at the cavalry—the dashing, slashing, smashing cavalry. My enthusiasm for cavalry was the result of my youthful admiration of a picture of the “Charge of the Light Brigade.” I recall my thrills as I would gaze on those brave fellows, with cannon to right, left, front, rear, charging away on the unfortunate infantry who could apparently do nothing but wait in mute and fearful admiration until they were all either killed, wounded, or missing. I used to wonder if the brigaders put in the time, when they were not riding down doughboys, by watching the grooms care for their fiery steeds and posing for the Sunday supplement. I said to myself, “That’s the life!”

I now wonder what would happen in case some recruit who did not know the rules of land warfare would get off-side and shoot up our brave troopers. While I have not seen the antidote for any such conduct, I have original ideas on the subject, and I make an



"THAT'S THE LIFE"

off-hand boast, that if there was a chance to reverse, I would make new amateur records for all distances up to five miles. You see I would then have room for speculation. I would hate to feel cramped in such a crisis.

There are other advantages of the cavalry game deserving of thoughtful consideration. In case, for example, a fellow doesn't like the looks of some gang of hostiles or feels too tired, or too proud to fight, he has only to change his bearings, go into high and make a detour through the tall timber where he may view the situation from a more encouraging angle.

On the hike, too, one can sit quietly on the hurricane deck with his feet on the railing and watch the scenery roll by.

Yes, the mounted service looked reasonable, but now after four blissful (?) days of it, I am inclined to believe that my youthful enthusiasm may have been a trifle overplayed. So far, I have found that the true story of a cavalryman agrees in no essential feature with the hilarious existence suggested by that brigade picture.

As a sort of curtain raiser to the main bout, the noble horse was brought forth and we were instructed in the location and nomenclature of his distinctive landmarks—legs, tail, hocks, floating ribs, splints and heels; then they read to us a chapter from the late rules on how to approach him forward or stern; we studied the mechanism of his navigation and control, and learned how to take a reef in his tail in case of high water.



FOR ALL DISTANCES UP TO FIVE MILES

I was disappointed to find that a rookie does not rate a saddle for the opening exercises. He draws only a blanket which is tied on so nicely that it stays put through the scrimmage. This omission was a bitter disappointment as I had a considerable confidence in my ability, developed by years of strap hanging in the subway, to hold on to anything as big as a saddle.

"Prepare to mount!" (No regular mounting blocks.) Everybody tackles high and gets the best hold he can. "Mount!" I made a flying leap but failed to land. I regained the shore with a dull thud. The craft moved. One more mighty effort. My head was now above board but I couldn't touch bottom. For a thrilling moment I dangled, suspended amidships. Then I slowly righted myself one leg on either bow, grasped the steering gear with the hand that wasn't holding the fringe on its neck and went full speed ahead. I disregarded signals to slow down as I could not seem to locate the anchor. Breakers appear ahead! No landing net or life line in sight!

The horse slid as if trying to make second on a Texas leaguer. I didn't slide—not to the best of my recollection—but I hove-to when I reached the other side of the fence, damaged but not wholly unserviceable. I climbed aboard again while he was making up his mind to try for home. Error number one for the horse. First assist for me.

From the first kick-off I had a feeling that either I or that animal didn't fit. He had a bad list—first to port, then to starboard—



I DIDN'T SLIDE—NOT TO THE BEST OF MY RECOLLECTION

—not end—

and an annoying pitching motion forward and aft. I ought to have a rebate on my deck space, as I occupied it so little of the time. When I wasn't going up, I was coming down. I could not seem to keep the cadence at all. The sensation was like a jitney going over cobblestones with a flat tire—only more so. Around and around we went. Circle right! Circle left! Trot! Gallop! everything but Halt! Just before a welcome death overtook me, we stopped. I was able to slide down the side. I felt—Modesty forbids a truthful statement of how, and where, I felt. The horse seemed bored.

One important thing about cavalry, William, a man more or less is regarded as a mere detail of, and incident to, the service, but the horse is of some consequence. Furthermore, he has his job wished on him and he has a come-back on that account. Therefore, he must be tenderly cared for, groomed, watered, fed and otherwise treated politely. After the rough stuff that horse put over on me, it got my goat to have to aid and abet him to a comfortable night's lodging, following an hour's fondling with a curry comb and flannel rag.

To groom a horse you rub all his fur the wrong way and then put it back; examine his feet for punctures; manicure his hoof; marcel his mane and massage his legs until the sergeant decides His Equiness seems contented. During this operation I discovered that the aroma of a heated horse and the fumes from the picket line are not just like any brands of perfumery in use in



**EITHER ME OR THAT HORSE DIDN'T FIT**



the best circles. I figure on joining the Allies and taking the gas cure, after which I shall rent a summer home down by the fish market by way of keeping in training for next year's camp.

All horses are subject to human frailties and weaknesses. For instance, they are ticklish, but by nothing short of an intimation of familiarity can one find out just where. Sometimes he is proud of his ears, sometimes it's his ribs, and frequently he resents one taking liberties with his tail. Ultimate success requires a delicate and diplomatic reconnaissance of the different localities until all his touch-me-nots are located and charted.

But the morning after the day before! I haven't had this kind of feeling since the Governor and a barrel stave figured with me in a little episode years ago. It is encouraging, anyhow, to feel that I am not too old to experience youthful pangs. I expect ultimately to recover the full use of my legs. Please speak for some nice standing up job for me.

On the other days we have had a list of diversions no less carefully selected and presented. The talented official who devised a system of such exquisite and irritating pleasures ought to write scenarios for Inquisition scenes.

Tomorrow I get a saddle. I hope the horse knows how to wear it.

Yours,

Jo.

P. S.—The artist who put over that Light Brigade fake was some kidder in his day.



**THEY ARE TICKLISH**

Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York,  
August 4, 1916.

DEAR BILL:

The horse knew how to wear the saddle, all right. I may say that he seemed thoroughly familiar with the subject. In fact, during our limited but active association that horse showed more symptoms of real intelligence than a lot of people I know who are outside of sanitariums.

The saddle has something on a blanket alone, but not to an extent that inspires a rookie with a great degree of cheerfulness. While the saddle differs mechanically in its mode of operation—attaining a higher degree of refinement in its methods of torture—the total results, mentally and physically, are not unlike those achieved by the blanket. For example, it has certain inequalities of surface that do not attract the attention of an untrained eye but which, nevertheless, make a lasting impression; the buckles on the stirrup straps have a snuggling affection for the inside of one's legs, and the blanket persistently bilges up through the center hatch.

The advantages seem to be that the stirrup straps make an excellent substitute for a scaling ladder and, while the pommel was probably not intended to serve as a guard railing, it offers a very convenient and certain hand hold in rough weather.

Although all the horses of this troop are of the same general model, they are not at all uniform in the matters of gait, speed or ease of operation. The animal assigned to me had no accomplishment that could, by the most liberal courtesy, be called a gait. His method of gaining ground was more on the principle of a pair of bars or a jig-saw. He was a marvel for speed but his steering gear needed fixing. Due to a lack of response to the tiller, his navigation was a source of constant excitement and uncertainty. This condition proved to have an adverse effect on my reputation as a pilot for land craft.

Spurs are a necessary and constant part of every cavalryman's toilet. Afoot or afloat, riding or walking, work or play, they are in proud attendance, dangling and clicking and catching on things. While I have not yet learned their secret and mysterious advantages, I have, through accidental and innocent research, discovered some of their negative values. The discovery was attended by results more instructive than pleasant for me. They should not be used in the manner of pole climbers or ice-tongs. I speak with authority on this point. The horse also has positive ideas as to the ethics and etiquette of their further indiscriminate use and I have learned to respect his prejudices.

After a few days out, and when we had sort of gotten our sea legs, the limits of our activities were extended from the restricted area of the stable yard to drills and manuev-



NOT TO BE USED LIKE ICE TONGS

ers, over regular country where the horse was not handicapped by the necessity of operating behind a fence. The drills were as formal and exciting as a funeral until it came time for a charge. You know the charge is supposed to be a rehearsal of that Light Brigade work, but my experience in its actual execution has strengthened my conviction that that artistic masterpiece was based on a wholly imaginary situation.

Preparatory to the charge, the troopers are lined up and canter down the field jauntily and without concern. Then they are supposed to have arrived at the fortunate and critical moment. There is the infantry just ahead, badly disorganized from terrific (but imaginary) conflict. (They are actually engaged in the unwarlike pastime of picking blueberries as they await recall.) Only two minutes of play left. There is no time for regulation strategy. The Captain says "Charge!" and every man does his duty, which consists in pointing his sabre in the direction he is going, and then going to it.

I recall that I was patiently trying to persuade one of my trouser legs to go back down where it started from and was not entirely prepared for quick action. I have never understood the horse's reason for such unseemly haste. He was half-way there by the time I was ready to start. It was a most remarkable burst of speed for a two-cylinder machine. He did not seem to understand that the program called for

only a short cruise, as he did not slow down when we crossed the line, though we were leading the nearest competitor by several lengths.

I had reached the proud state of my training when I felt justified, under normal conditions, in attempting to exercise a certain amount of influence over our uncertain destinies, and in the earlier stages of our wild flight I sought to exert a restraining hand, but as the charge developed in all its terrifying glory, I abandoned all ideas of correct navigation. If I had any official function, it was that of a stow-a-way. My chances of avoiding disaster seemed to rest on clear sailing or a safe port.

I managed to keep aboard, but the cargo was shifting badly and all articles not securely fastened were left behind to blaze a trail for possible searching parties. I regret that the chap who made Paul Revere famous could not have seen us in action.

I rapidly calculated that we were well ahead of the record for cross country flights and was speculating on the possible steaming radius of a 1901 model, when we reached the woods. I have never approved of passing through woods at any pace other than a saunter, with appropriate pauses to comment on the scenery or pick four-leaf clovers, but on this occasion I found myself navigating the grand old forest with a celerity that completely upset this cherished rule, and otherwise hampered the free operation of a naturally romantic disposition.

At this particular instant, or thereabouts, something interfered with my progress. I have since learned that it was a limb of a noble monarch of the forest. The interference was applied in the immediate vicinity of my Adam's Apple.

The tensile strength of the human neck is indeed marvelous.

I was salvaged and taken to the hospital. The doctors pronounced the malady unusual, but with a probable low rate of mortality in my case. I was much relieved on learning that I had not violated orders against devastating the forest (the tree was not injured), and that the horse had not been found. I hope his final destination remains an unsolved mystery.

While my neck was being encouraged to resume its normal functions and graceful proportions, I had the advantages afforded by a ring-side seat for observing the manipulations of that honored institution—the Soldiers' Infirmary. As all other incidents in a soldier's life are controlled by whistle or bugle signals, so, too, is his sickness a matter of regulations. "Sick Call" goes at 7 A.M. and all the sick, lame and lazy, including those who may suspect themselves within the next twenty-four hours, are marched up to this place of tender ministrations.

After several days of comparisons and tabulations, I concluded that while civilians are subject to divers ills calling for various methods of treatment, soldiers' ailments are





THE TENSILE STRENGTH OF THE HUMAN NECK IS INDEED MARVELOUS

all alike, or, at least, the same remedy is appropriate in all cases. This panacea consists of certain plump, black pills. The only variation seems to be in the number, and that is apparently a professional secret. I could arrive at no code that satisfactorily explained why some tender, hot-house plant with the pip should draw six, while a big husky with the stomach-ache should get but one. The general results appear to be about the same. The relief afforded is either universal and permanent, or the complaints are preferred to the remedy, as no one seems to make a second call.

There appears to be one exception to this standard rule of treatment, and that is in case of sore feet. Corns, blisters and other foot ailments are punctured, cut, burned, painted, swabbed and bound with a careful solicitude probably meant to impress the rookie with the relative importance of this portion of his anatomy. That the victim does not take the lesson seriously may be inferred from the fact that thereafter all such base and lowly ills are operated on by his tent-mate with his jack-knife and a piece of adhesive.

I made my escape from the hospital in time to join my troop for the hike, and was much surprised to learn that, like Mulvaney, I had been made a corporal. I have been unable to learn whether the distinction was conferred for cause or if the Captain did it on a bet. Whatever the reason, it was

not sufficient or well founded, as subsequent events have proved.

The cavalryman's trials on the hike are not unlike those that arise to vex the soul of the lowly doughboy. The same hectic conditions of camping and messing are common to both types of fighting men. I soon found that my mental picture of a swaggering trooper's life of ease and plenty was a trifle overdrawn. He rides out and he rides in with a pompous and frightful mein, but he soon learns to his discomfort that his fighting is done on foot. True, he may get to camp first, but by the time he has conferred on the horse the prescribed minimum of grooming, watering and feeding, the eight-hour law has been flanked on both ends and pierced in the center. If there is a haven of rest any place in this soldier game, my patient research has not been rewarded. There may be a side-door entrance to a seat on the throne of military lore, but if such exists the persistent efforts of a high-class little searcher have failed to locate the secret spring. My modest responsibilities and simple failures as the keeper of a flock of seven have served to suspend my inclination for high command, and my dream of military glory has been correspondingly punctured.

The Captain's job always looked too easy. He had only to blow the whistle and sound-off. The poor duffers in ranks seemed to do all the work. Stage managing for a bevy of patriots looked as simple as raising on

two pairs before the draw—no regular rules or conventions about it. At least the thing so appeared to me until I tried the system out on my squad. That experiment soon led to the discovery that the successful exercise of command does not entirely depend on the whistle and an indistinct articulation. In my efforts to regulate the movements of that outfit, I caused it to undertake twists and turns that are not laid down in the drill book of any army—evolutions that defied description or classification as to origin, purpose or results. Although we would start first, we would arrive last; we would go when we should come; ditches, fences and swamps seemed to have an uncanny predilection for meeting us unawares, and the caprices of the proverbial flea rampant were known and definite quantities when compared to our aimless wanderings in a maneuver.

For being in the wrong place at the right time, our fielding average is only 990. The other time we were captured by an infantry patrol while I was trying to make up my mind what Phil Sheridan would have done had he been confronted by such a complex situation. As the captors rode our horses to camp while we carried their packs, my local reputation as a military genius was somewhat jeopardized by the unfortunate occurrence. I cannot here repeat, without violating the postal laws, the stirring sentiments, individually and collectively expressed by my squad, concerning my ability

as a leader. I admit the correctness of their estimate. To only say that I am rotten would be rank flattery.

The great rock in this weary land of rookie leaders is not that we are all bad—some more so, if possible—but that we are not kept in ignorance of our attainments. Our friends and the Captain have been cruelly frank on that point.

It is with a feeling of relief that I look forward to the early termination of this campaign.

Yours,

Jo.



THE STIRRING SENTIMENTS EXPRESSED BY MY SQUAD

Military Training Camp,  
Plattsburg, New York.  
August 7, 1916.

DEAR BILL:

As I fondly pack away a torn and faded khaki uniform and other habiliments of a tired and tickled rookie, preparatory to returning to my little playmates at home, I harbor no illusions as to the extent of my proficiency as a soldier, to say nothing as to my qualifications for an officer.

Aside from a few of the basic principles of the military game, I have learned one thing we civilians pretty generally overlook—the value of discipline and team work, which, translated into ordinary language, means that every man knows his part in the play and goes to it at the right time, in the right way, without consulting the boss. Incidentally, I have also dropped to the fact that soldiering is the job of specialist, requiring more real head work than you might fancy.

To me, at least, the proposition seems to be about as follows: If, after two months, I am unable to control an army of seven, when will I qualify to ride herd on a hundred or a thousand? If I knew the answer I would tell you. I might suggest 2013 as a rough estimate, provided I maintain my average rate of improvement.

I have observed that the Captain not only

commands and controls in matters of physical care, comfort and instruction, but that he does it with unlimited tact, patience, charity and discretion. He must be proficient in the use of all the working tools of his job, and there is no other way just as good. No second string man can stay on the first team in this game. To be a member in good standing, he must have the dope and know where and how to apply it. All other kinds gum the cards and ball-up the play. A fellow gets the dope by a process known as training, extensive as well as intensive. There is no magic way of accumulating it. It is true that leaders have sometimes risen from the ranks, but since Moses acted as Chief Guide for the Chosen, the average of ready made leaders has been low. I had cherished the hope that I might become the modern patriarch to revise the constitution and by-laws of our preparedness slump, and lead our children from the wilderness, but it is not so to be. A vivid recollection of my experiences with that misguided squad causes my plans for being a military paragon to consist principally in realizing that I have nothing definite to offer, and very little of that. I have completely abandoned the idea of beginning at the top and working down. That route is already playing to standing room, but I can now, at least, root for preparedness with a fair idea of what it is all about. Possibly I can act as bat boy or carry water for the elephant in some of the main exercises.



Two months of inside information have also expanded my understanding of good citizenship, and, while I may be in error, I have a feeling that our time-honored system of inherited patriotism has been putting too much strain on the fly wheel. A run of good luck has enabled us to hurdle or knock down the fences without serious set-backs, but some day some mischievous gentlemen will soap the track, and we will start a slide that can't be controlled by earnest conversation. Then, the rules of our great national pastime of kidding ourselves into the belief that we are too big to tackle will be subject to revision in a vein more in sympathy with current events. By quite a simple and direct process, we may learn that real patriotism and power are based on something more tangible than the reckless dangling of the most beautiful flag in the world.

It is true we may have a million men over night; in fact, we may have several million men plastered about the scenery of this good old U. S. A., in half that time, but many of them already written lists of the fifty-seven reasons why they should be excused. Of course they would all go if they thought they were really needed—they admit that—but the draft riots of '62 do not encourage us to believe that they would be overcome by dizziness from making up their minds too quickly. It is also true that the 500,000 odd who deserted during the Civil War were forgiven and

granted pensions, but it is, we hope, a matter of pardonable curiosity if we speculate on a percentage that would come early and stay late at any little party we might be invited to in the future.

However, there is always the consolation that we are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We have that assurance in writing, and if any marauder attempts to deprive us of these our inalienable rights, we will show him the rules. If we were not guarded by such time-honored sentiments we might require all our citizens to prepare themselves to lend a hand in time of need. Universal training would at this particular time, it is true, interfere with some of our more profitable commercial habits, such as making munitions for war sufferers, and that would be a bad business departure; it would not, however, curtail our ability or spirit to protect those of our people who prefer our frontier as a place of abode—and that would be good national form. A throbbing sense of justice and brotherly love is our prize virtue; everyone, from Chinese to Armenians, says so, but in its domestic expression this quality does not appear to be so foolishly comprehensive as to include the nervous meddling with the destinies of our own citizens who wander to far from the centers of population, and the influence of the regular police.

In the words of the old Greek optimist, "Let the people rule." While this ancient



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sentiment has not always held true (note the occasion when that notorious bully, Judge Samson, chastised the Philistines; and, again, when our own Casey of Mudville had a reversal of form), yet the people have always come back strong, and have frequently gotten a decision over the talent. If the people don't want it, Bill, they just naturally will not follow the directions on the bottle, and we are left with the goods on our hands at the end of the season. People are strong things, like habits and Three Star Brandy, the more you try to control them, the more you don't succeed.

Good old George Washington! We have thought him something of a rooter for preparedness in his day, but we may expect to hear that our pacifist friends have investigated him and found that he was but a sly old citizen in league with the munition makers, and that Valley Forge was a frame-up to fool the votes.

I am in favor of the kind of preparedness that will enable this country to attend to its own business, and which will encourage others to follow the same general rule. Preparedness so regulated that no class of persons will have a monopoly on letting the other fellow do all the preparing. We hear much about equal opportunities, but little about equal responsibilities. If we have anything worth protecting, let us all join in plans for doing so in a practical manner, instead of further imposing on that grand

old lullaby about Freedom springing to arms.

Freedom may spring, but unless she is considerable better organized than at present for participation in that athletic event, her springs will be followed by a very early fall.

Yours,

Jo.





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